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**SERMON XXX.**

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THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

"And he was transfigured before them."—MARK ix: 2.

AMONG the numerous slabs of marble which adorn that noblest of structures, the Pantheon at Rome, there is one whereon is inscribed these few words: *Rafaello Sanzio Natus est, Mar. 8th, 1483; Obiit, Ap. 7th, 1520: 37. aet.* and as you stand before that humble sepulchre and recall the power, the gifts, and the genius, that once animated the form there sleeping, emotions far deeper, higher, and grander, animate your soul, than the lips of orator can possibly awaken, or the imagination of poet ever prompt. And these high-wrought feelings—or a sentiment of mingled awe and reverence is yours; not simply because you are near the shrine of one eminent for virtue, distinguished for patriotism, esteemed for patience and perseverance; nor yet, that you are confronting one of the most symmetrical characters in all history, but because you are in the presence of all that is mortal of him, who of men living, or dead, has alone been able to grasp and portray with transcendent and admitted power, those scenes, events, and personages connected with that relig-

ion, wherewith are bound up our highest hopes—our best and most permanent interests.

It was the happy consolation of the immortal Titian in his 98th year, that the first scene which it was his privilege to represent upon canvas, was the salutation of Mary and Elizabeth, as recorded by Luke ; and as his last work, the death of the same being which formed the central figure of his first picture. His rival and contemporary, Raphaël, governed by feelings equally as holy, entered upon his noble career by sketching a Madonna on the walls of his father's yard ; but after years of toil and industry, gave as his last great work—as Rome's inheritance—as our inheritance—nay, as the world's inheritance, the scene which our text so naturally introduces to us :—the wonderful event of the Transfiguration. And although three hundred years and more have elapsed since this prince of Christian artists transferred to the canvas that grand conception which was his, yet to-day, every figure and form, the grouping of the disciples, the appearance of the Master, Moses and Elias, the expression upon every countenance, and the richness of every shade and color, is still as pure and perfect, as though the master hand had just been withdrawn, to recover from its accustomed fatigue.

Regarded as Raphaël's picture of the Transfiguration is, by many, as the first in the world, and portraying as it does one of the grandest scenes in all Biblical history, allow me, here, to allude briefly to a single circumstance attending its execution. Long and patiently had this distinguished artist labored to develop the conception, which the event before us had awakened in his mind, and to clothe it with a power, and an expression, worthy, if possible, its high origin and nature. Day succeeded day in serious study and application ; not a sun was allowed to set, without leaving its record of kindred tints, upon the canvas stretched before him. But, alas—ere he had given it a final touch—before that simple word “pinxit,” the last lines upon every picture, could be written, in the corner, that eye, which had discriminated so accurately in the arrangement and reproduction of shade and color, became dim ; and the hand which had traced those exquisite forms, and expressions, was cold and stiff in death. As a tree, laden with the richest bloom, those pledges of a full harvest, is prostrated by a tempest, so fell this mighty Christian painter. Courtiers, philosophers, and plebeians vied with each other to do him reverence ; and high and numerous were the eulogies pronounced upon him, by the good and great ; but surely, none more affecting—more moving than those which came from his own unfinished labor. For it is recorded that ere he was carried to his last resting place, his body was borne to his study, and over it was hung, this his picture, his noblest work. Crowds upon crowds of the rich and the

poor, the learned and the ignorant, strangers, companions, artists, flocked to that silent chamber ; and as they entered it—as friend after friend crossed that familiar threshold, to gaze for the last time upon his thin pallid features, the marked contrast between the forms of breathing life above him, still wet with the colors of his brush, and his own mute lips, and rigid—motionless hands, drew from eyes unused to weep, the deeply buried tear, that one so gifted, so enriched by heaven, should have been removed, ere the world had received the full fruits of his ripe genius and devotion. Thus it is, that frequently the grandest and most affecting scenes on earth, are blended with the happiest, and most memorable revelations of God.

But to the event. Since the fourth century, tradition has fixed upon Mount Tabor, in Galilee, as the locality of the scene, now under our consideration ; and many devout hearts still regard that rounded woody mount, as the spot where this wondrous scene occurred. But when we remember, that at this period that solitary eminence was inhabited to the top, and that but a few days previous, the Saviour was among the plains and highlands of Gaulonitis, on the east of Gennesareth, it is more than probable, that some one of the many spurs of the Hermon range, than any hill or mount in Galilee west of the sea bearing that name, witnessed this remarkable phenomenon. Whether, however, it occurred in Galilee, or on Tabor, or on snowy Hermon, we know that it was in some retired spot, and well adapted to the revelations which were there to be made ; even “ in a high mountain apart.”

Reviewing the narrative as related by the several evangelists, thus does it come to us :

As the sun began to sink below the rugged western range, a group could have been seen leaving their quiet home, and seeking the public way. 'Tis the Master, with three of his chosen disciples—Peter, afterwards the bold expounder of his truth ; James, the courageous witness of his cross ; and John, who leaned upon his breast at supper. The man of rock—the son of thunder, and the beloved disciple. Together they sought the appointed place, where were to be witnessed those grand scenes, and to be heard those wondrous revelations, which were to dispel forever their unbelief, and to assure earth of heaven's deepest love and sympathy. Guided by the lingering twilight, they wander from valley to valley, and cross hill and dale, till at last they reach the coveted mount ; and under the shelter of darkness begin their journey up its rugged sides. If then, Hermon's spurs were as rough, thickly wooded, and difficult of ascent as now, fatiguing indeed must have been their march, tortuous their path—weary, excessively wearying their labor. Long since have the lights of the distant city and village grown dim, and

the stars, supplementing the orb of day, in their bridal robes, as only in Syria they seem to be worn, have taken their position in the clear deepening firmament. Following some trail, or what is more than probable, as night had set in, making a path for themselves, in line, as to-day we would thread our way up a wooded mount, do they, trampling upon the fragrant arbutus, and pushing aside the branches of oak, and the tender pistachios, climb the hill before them. What indeed must have been their thoughts, as step succeeded step, on that lonely eminence! As the sun had long since disappeared behind distant Carmel, no sound, is heard save the murmuring of the mountain brook, the sighing of the wind, and the crackling of thorn and oak beneath their feet. The eagle has long since retired to his craggy home, and the hunted partridge found her mate in the grassy plain below. With cheerful heart, and determined spirit they press on and on, but little heeding their rough path of stone and bramble. At last, they reach the summit; and all is still and calm. After that fatiguing tramp, how refreshing must have been that mountain air, as it came cooled by the snows from lofty Hermon, or perfumed with flowers from Jordan's blooming vale!

How grand the scene! The dome of heaven spread out before them with its worlds of light and beauty. In the west, are seen the dark outlines of Carmel standing against the sky; in yonder basin, rests the placid sea, of Tiberias; and far below, on those neighboring plains, shepherds watch their flocks.

Indeed, so wearisome had been the journey, and exhausting the ascent, that the disciples, alike prostrated with the mental agitation which was their's, yield at once to the demands of nature, and soon are found locked in the sweet embrace of sleep. Observe, 'twas not the sleep of grief, as afterward in the garden, when they were again permitted to retire with the Master; rather the result of pure physical exhaustion, combined with undue mental anxiety. As now, excessive excitement whether of joy or of sorrow is followed by weariness, or hard physical labor superinduces rest, so then, the fatiguing journey, the mountain's ascent, and the end for which they had been led up that rugged slope, provoked slumber sure and sweet. And while they thus rested, the Master, though weary and troubled with greater anxieties, carrying far heavier griefs, bowed down with greater burdens, retires to pray. Beneath the clear vault of heaven, and amid the stillness of the night, he would commune with his Father. With him the spiritual outweighs the carnal; the divine leads the human, the temporal is lost in the eternal. No wearisomeness, no fatigue, no hour can hinder his appointed work. And as he knelt in supplication, and from his lips there went forth such utterances as man never spake—in a moment, he was transfigured! Wondrous hour! Wondrous event!

Not indeed that in his appearance, his noble form became more symmetrical, or that his countenance reflected more distinctly the glory of his Father, nor yet, that it changed its nature, passing (so to say) into material more refined, purer — brighter; rather was it a withdrawing of the veil that, since his advent to the earth, had concealed the glory of his godhead, which was now revealed in all the fullness of his uncreated honor and glory. The fashion of his countenance, though bronzed by the rays of a Judean sun, becoming irradiated by light from within, shone with dazzling splendor. Verily his heavenly glory, and original nature were both unveiled. The light from heaven, mingling with his own inner light, blending in beautiful harmony, gave more than celestial effulgence to his praying face and form. Meekness now gave way to majesty, sadness to dazzling glory, and the look of pity to the grandeur of a God. In truth, the spirit which gave such richness to his character, and such sweetness to his life, seemingly burst its bounds, and leaving its home, the heart, revealed itself in his whole being. The Divinity in his humanity waits not for his dissolution ere its effulgence be manifested; but now, even now, does it disclose itself. Yes, he was bathed in glory. The Divine glittered, distinctly glittered in the human. Or as the evangelists express it, "his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light;" or as Luke records it, "the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering;" "whiter (adds Mark) than fuller on earth could make them." Such did he appear. The despised Nazarene, the manifested Lord of Glory.

And while thus enveloped in all the splendors of his primal existence, he prayed. And two mysterious and resplendent beings, wrapped in the same shining vestments, clothed (shall we say) in glorified bodies, (Moses and Elias) as messengers of the Most High, fresh from their celestial thrones, appeared and communed with him. Heaven has cheer for its absent Lord and King. It would speak with him who left its glory to assume the burdens of the cross. Stupendous sympathy! and how wonderful the scene! The drowsy disciples, startled by the voice, or awakened by the supernal light about them, arise, only however to fall prostrate upon the ground. Before that dazzling glare and effulgence, eye and form alike yield. Celestial scenes are too grand, far too grand, to be gazed upon by human eye and that eye retain its look and lustre. The Redeemer glorified can not be seen by mortal flesh, and that flesh remain unmoved. Peter, however, soon recovering himself, rises, and enraptured with the view before him, and recognizing the two with his Master, as the early prophets, with his usual impetuosity, breaks the silence of the hour. He would speak with his Master. As



heaven has thus stooped to earth, and borne witness to the character of his Lord, here, upon this very mount would he build three pavilions; "one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." But while he spake, "not knowing what he said," a cloud, not like that which rested upon Sinai's peak, from whose dense darkness came forth thunders and lightning, but bright and shining—intensely luminous, as that which led the children in their pilgrimage, and which had dwelt so often between the cherubim and the seraphim, floated down from the high vault of heaven, and rested upon them; enclosing in its brilliant folds, heaven's messengers and the Redeemer. As words were to be said, which it was not lawful for erring man to hear, heaven, on that mountain top, provides a sanctuary in which they may be spoken. The royal heir of this world, and all worlds, with the exalted two, alone enters that vapory tabernacle. The only begotten son only, can attend the imperial council. And as Jesus passed within those shining folds, leaving the disciples alone, I wonder not that they were afraid. Was their Master to return with the messengers to the skies, leaving unredeemed his promise? Had they come now to bear him home to his kingdom? Was this the wondrous chariot which was to return him to his vacant throne? Who can imagine their astonishment, or know their fears? Day after day had they followed their Master, and had witnessed his power; they knew his origin; they were familiar with his destiny, and the end of his advent. They knew that he was the Son of the Father—the Messiah of the world. Was he now abruptly to terminate his mission, and leave them, his chosen friends, alone to battle with sin; alone to repel the rising tide of jealousy, of fanaticism coming from every quarter; alone, to plant the standard of the cross on every Judean hill?

But while they stood wondering, perplexed, astonished, from the bosom of the glittering veil, that shining cloud, that inaccessible light, a voice, like that which but a short time before was heard in the waters of the Jordan, came saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." 'Tis God who speaks; and clothed as of old in the mount does he re-visit the earth. He would not talk face to face with man, but thus reveals himself. How strange the appearance! How grand the declaration! The disciples, aware of their own unworthiness, and who it is that speaks, become disabled by the sight, and with mingled fear and reverence seek the dust. Losing, as it were, all consciousness, they are thrown to the ground. The Master seeing their tremor—their fear, goes and touches them, as Gabriel touched the prophet, and as before, virtue went from his garment, and he healed a running issue, and his touch restored sight to darkened eye-balls; so now the mere contact of his hand, with their almost paralyzed bodies, awakens them, and

he bids them rise. The grand commission has been given. The New Covenant has been established. Heaven has communed with its Lord, and strengthened him for his work. And when obedient to his command, they lifted up their eyes from that chilly earth, behold, the celestial visitors had returned to their home, bearing with them the cloud in which they had been so resplendently robed. And Jesus, as when he left them, stood solitary and alone.

Such imperfectly was the scene ; such the transaction on the lofty peak of Hermon, or some of its numerous spurs. And who can contemplate it, without feelings of awe and reverence, blended with emotions of the deepest gratitude ? God has not forgotten this earth ; though it is the home and the scene of sin, he still loves it, and still would he reveal his presence and his power ; yea, though it bears the mark of the curse, still would he commune with it, and he is ready ever and ever to bless it.

While, my friends, this great truth is here mirrored to us, and with it there is established the grand union and harmony of the church above and the church below ; and while this wondrous event discloses, also, clearly and distinctly, the happy relations of the Law and the Gospel ; and the light, and the clouds, and the glory there seen forever shall stand as a symbol of Christ's eternal glory ; yet, primarily, we believe that its end and its aim was,

I. *To confirm the Master in the character which he had assumed as the Saviour of the world.*

True, thirty years before the angel had announced to Mary, in Nazareth, his birth ; and his advent had been chanted by myriads of the heavenly hosts on the plains of Bethlehem. And when he entered upon his special work, at his baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon him ; and from heaven came there a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son." True, again and again had he manifested his power, as at Cana, Capernaum, and at Nain, in healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb ; and frequently had he testified of his mission and of his high origin. But yet, after all, many doubted and turned away ; and among them even those who were his immediate followers. But now the period had arrived when even a yet surer confirmation was to be given to his end, his claim and his mission. The weak and timid disciples were to be made to see, and see clearly, that his kingdom was not of the world ; and be impressed with the truthfulness of his primal power and glory.

That free, open testimony even of Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," was not evoked from an inner perception of his Master's nature and dignity ; that perception which is deeper, and stronger than vision or sight ; rather upon

his view of the many works his Saviour had wrought. But now, the hour had come when sight and faith were to be blended, and appear as double stars, giving forth but one and the same blazing light. To those numerous exhibitions of power and of wisdom manifested in the Master, so marvelous, so varied, so perplexing, must there be added convictions and views, which would render belief surer, and make his attendant disciples more fully alive to the dignity and responsibility of their calling. Frequently had their Master revealed rays of his exalted nature, and from his mouth had there fallen words which had confounded them; and by his hands, works had been wrought which had perplexed and bewildered them; yea, in his serene countenance they had read his unoffending character. But now from his *whole* form, his hands, his countenance, was there to go forth a blaze of glory—to be “transfigured”—wholly changed; yea, from his humble Nazarene robe, that very robe which again and again had brought upon him the eye of reproach, was to shine—glisten with an effulgence brighter than the very sun. In truth, in their history as his followers, he was to inaugurate a new epoch, and for the future put them in possession of a witness which should lead them patiently to endure every reproach, suffer every buffeting, even beating, and which would make them strong and triumphant in death, be it at the stake or upon the cross.

And to give this testimony, how appropriate was this period? Ere long, as he had told them, he was to be delivered into the hands of his enemies, and exposed to the most bitter cruelties. They would see him betrayed, and hurried away by violence, arraigned before an iniquitous judge. They would see him treated as a malefactor, insulted and scourged, and against him pronounced the sentence of death, and delivered up to the cruelties and caprices of a brutal mob. Soon would they be called upon to witness his sufferings on the cross; to hear his bitter cries; to see him pierced, and even laid away in the sepulchre; scenes apt to weaken their faith, and which did, as the sequel showed. But though such were to be his experiences, they were to remember that the grand scene, which had been disclosed to them, was to absolve all their natural doubt; and to assure them, though these events must come to pass, that he must suffer and die, yet he was divine; the long promised Redeemer of the world. The darkness, which was to attend his last hours, was to be made light by the remembrance of this very vision, and with it was all gloom to be lost and dispelled, just as the rising sun dispels the shades of night. And as such, as a check on unbelief, does Peter happily refer to it in one of his epistles: “brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and the coming of the Lord



Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And the voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." Jesus is divine. He is the Saviour; God's only begotten Son.

II. Together with the fact that the event we are considering gives us an unanswerable attestation to the divinity of Christ, would we associate the truth, that it also reveals to us the *fact of our immortality*.

For ages upon ages previous to the scene before us had the cry gone forth, "dust thou art, to dust returnest." Was it spoken of the soul? This, in the main, was the query of Socrates, the sigh of Plato, and the question, indeed, of all alive to their character and nature. Century followed century, as year followed year, gathering in their course the good and great of every nation and of every land, and buried them in the earth. And yet no light, no solution of the ever present question came. Of the countless numbers, who had left the world since it was started in its orbit, not one had ever returned; nor had any communication been received from them by the earth. Gazing over the broad ocean, or far away to the blue depths of space, many and many an awakened spirit thus had asked—

When that vast sun shall veil his golden light,  
Deep in the gloom of everlasting night;  
When wild destruction's flame shall wrap the skies,  
When chaos triumphs, and when nature dies,  
Shall man alone the wreck of worlds survive?  
'Midst falling sphere, shall he immortal live?

Nature had been studied, and from the rising sap, and from the budding leaf, and bloom of spring, it had been inferred, that man may awaken to newness of life, and arise to similar beauty and splendor. The bosom had been questioned, and from its inner sanctuary there had come the impression, that corruption shall put on incorruption, and that mortal shall put on immortality. Else,

Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself and startles at destruction?

But the teachings of nature, the deductions of reason, and the impressions of the conscience, of the heart, had never been confirmed. At most, they were but probabilities, not certainties; dreams or hopes, not facts. Now, however, all doubt was to be removed. With the Master, two resplendent forms, Moses and Elias, appeared and spake with him. In celestial bodies the once dead had come to commune with Jesus; and with their effulgent

forms illumed the whole mountain, and spake in language known to the disciples.

Such briefly is the account. Deny, my friend, this part of the narrative and you deny the whole. As Christ can not be divided, no more can his word. The dead do live. Immortality is man's destiny.

O soul, earth is no home for thee ;  
Thy starry rest is in eternity.

And as distinctly bright appeared, my friends, these servants of the Most High ; as they came clothed in the brightness of the saints in glory, so shall every true and faithful believer be transfigured, if he now honors that same gracious being, who was so honored on distant Hermon's spur, and follows him from day to day, as patiently and as faithfully, as did the few witnesses of his glory. This is the legacy which the wondrous scene we have now considered bequeaths to us. It is an inheritance beyond the price of all rubies, and it furnishes us with the grandest incentives to love, forbearance and holiness, no one can question, when recalling the end of his creation—the end of his being, and the purpose of that compassion which thus far has followed him in his pilgrimage to that country, whose fields we must all so shortly tread ? As a bright and eternal futurity awaits every disciple, let us then be faithful in every walk that we may attain unto the life everlasting.

## SERMON XXXI.

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### SOCIAL DANCING.\*

"Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."—Ezek. iii: 17.

"See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."—Eph. v: 15.

"Quench not the Spirit."—1 Thess. v: 19.

THE position of a "watchman" involves weighty responsibilities; and these responsibilities concentrate upon the Christian pastor. In the highest sense he is a watchman. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," includes the sum of pastoral instruction. Our labor ends when we have enjoined true wisdom, in a holy circumspection, touching every personal and relative interest. "Quench not the spirit," is the climax of pastoral warning. Most carefully must the pastor guard his people against aught, that by any possibility may grieve the Holy Spirit, and stay the progress of God's work of saving mercy.

We are persuaded (our conversation and our prayers attest it), that the spirit of God is moving upon our hearts. We are hereby reminded of the necessity of using double diligence—the *people* that they may walk circumspectly, the *pastor* that he may act the part of a faithful watchman, and *all* that we may escape the fearful sin of quenching the spirit of our God. The watchman upon these walls, looking out upon the interests entrusted to him, observes an evil of which he needs to warn and instruct his people lest it grow to proportions which shall prove disastrous. We deem the present an exceedingly suitable time for calling attention to it. 1. Because it is an evil that now exists. 2. Because the conscience of many is tender, and ready to feel the force of the considerations which may be urged. 3. Because he believes that in some of our families the evil may have the effect of counteracting God's gracious and refreshing work. 4. Because it is regarded by professing Christians as a matter of indifference or as a mere innocent pastime. There are four clas-

\* This sermon was preached during a season of special religious interest in the congregation of the author, and for the express purpose of counteracting the unhappy influence that "Dancing Sociables" were exciting.—E. B. E.

ses who advocate it. The careless and worldly-minded, who are glad to drive away all thoughts of the soul and eternity; the thoughtful professors of religion, through mistaken views of its nature; the careless professors, who have lost the savor of piety; and the indifferent, who are ready for any wind of doctrine, and to whom all creeds and practices are alike. We would guard you against the evil minded, we would instruct the mistaken, and admonish the careless and indifferent. The evil to which we allude, is SOCIAL DANCING AS IT IS NOW SUSTAINED AND PRACTICED. It has the same features everywhere, and is always open to the severest rebuke and censure. We have no knowledge that it is ever practiced upon Christian principle, or so as not to compromise and injure Christian character.

I. In the outset of the discussion, we are willing to hear what is urged in its justification.

1. We are told that it is a *very old custom*. True. It is very old. True, also, that antiquity comes in as an excellent plea to continue a practice provided that you first prove it to be good. A bad thing is no better for having been long established. Murder is one of the oldest crimes, and the flight of time will never make it aught else. Be sure that you are right before you plead antiquity in justification of what you do.

2. *David danced, therefore we may dance*. True, David did dance, but before the Lord, and (as was the custom among the Jews), as an act of religious worship. Is social dancing an act of religious worship? When was there ever a dancing party begun with prayer, accompanied by songs of praise, and closed with giving of thanks? If you plead David's example, you must imitate him in full; you must imbibe his spirit; and dance around your sanctuaries, and within walls consecrated to prayer and praise! Will you? Can you?

3. Solomon says: "*There is a time to dance;*" and *when shall we have it if not when we are young*. But Solomon says in the same connection, there is "a time to kill," "a time to lose" (i. e. by gambling), and "a time to hate." According to the argument that would find a warrant for dancing in this passage, you can find a warrant for murder, gambling, and anger. It is manifest that the wise man is simply declaring certain facts as they actually existed, in order to show how full of change and vanity the world is. He does not thereby pronounce that because these things exist they are virtuous.

4. *Some good people dance*. Very true. But to the "Law and the Testimony." If any custom will not stand this test you may not plead example on its behalf. God's people are not perfect. The best of men have often indulged in unseemly practices. Suppose, however, we affirm "Some good people do not, and will not dance." Now if you plead that the example

of some gives you a right to dance, we insist that the example of others forbids you the indulgence.

5. *There is nothing wrong*, (it is affirmed), *in the mere motion of the body*. We admit it, considered simply as a motion. But when the motion is an acted lie, as when I point in the wrong direction and mislead a traveler, or when I wink the eye and give a wrong meaning to what I say, then it ceases to be a mere motion. You thus see that the circumstances of the case and the purport of the bodily motion must be taken into the account. Dancing is not mere bodily motion. It has thought and feeling associated with it, and these have at times been so palpable and well-sustained as to produce the most marked results. "The ancient Greeks reduced dancing to a regular system, and had dances proper for exciting . . . any passion whatsoever in the minds of the beholders. In this way they are said to produce effects to us absolutely incredible. At Athens, it is stated that the dance had so expressive a character as to strike the spectators with irresistible terror. Men grown old in the profession of arms trembled; the multitude ran out! people imagined that they saw in earnest those terrible deities commissioned with the vengeance of heaven to pursue and punish crimes upon earth." Take away the thoughts and emotions that are so intimately associated with this amusement and we would soon come to the conclusion of Cicero, who said, "No one dances unless he is either drunk or mad."

6. It is also urged: *Youth need recreation And they may as well have it this way as any other. There are foolish plays worse than dancing*. We reply. Then lay aside the foolish and improper plays. One evil does not justify another. As to recreation, however, you should consider that its object is to refresh the body and promote health. Can social dancing, in heated rooms, crowded to excess, and at late hours, secure either of these objects? It can not be. No form of amusement can be more injurious. We appeal to those who indulge in it, if the next day, headache, exhaustion, nervous irritability, and loss of appetite, do not announce that nature has been overtaxed, and no recreation secured. Late hours are bad enough, but let the wearisome dance be added, and the exposure of the heated body to the cold damp air of early mornings be super-added, and we are persuaded that few constitutions can escape ruin. There can not be a question but that the social dance has hurried many of our youth and maidens into an early grave, or else has laid the foundation for a miserable and diseased existence: Away then with this plea of recreation, and call things by their right names. Social dancing as an existing and practiced thing is nothing else than midnight revelry. Alas! what a perversion of language and common sense to call revelry, recreation!



7. But we are told: *It is an accomplishment—a part of a genteel education, and that it need not be abused.* Well, then, work a reform. Strip the dance of all its evil associations and tendencies, purge it from everything that is offensive to good taste, rule out all that is unseemly and immodest, and then let us see what you have left of this accomplishment. We are very much of the opinion that you would not care to plead for what would remain after such a reform. As a matter of fact the thing is itself an abuse, and you can not remove the evil without destroying the institution. And is such an institution to be called an accomplishment? Whatever the dance may be in the abstract, the social dance is not an accomplishment. Wherein by it are we fitted the better for the refinements and elegancies of Christian and elevated society? To what extent is the intellect improved? What addition is made to Christian graces? The very circumstances that surround it utterly forbid that it should add one real grace to either the mind or heart. We fear that the accomplishment and grace which it imparts, is at the sacrifice of that which is of far higher value, even the graces of the spirit and the ornaments of true virtue.

8. We add but one other plea, viz. *My companions dance, I can not be called singular, and will not be regarded prudish.* In this plea we hear the voice of the young Christian, and we reply; well, then, you can not go to heaven. Christians must be singular. You must deny yourself and take up the cross. Not the dearest friend on earth should be allowed to influence you to act against your conscience. You must learn to endure the finger of scorn. This is one of the first and most important Christian lessons, and it will be well if you learn it with no greater sacrifice than the loss of a questionable amusement.

II. We have thus given the advocates of this practice a hearing, and any one can judge for himself how far they have made out their cause. The real evil, however, must be placed before you, or we shall not have discharged our duty as a watchman. Before proceeding, however, you will allow us to pause, that we may give you the judgment of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church with reference to this matter. In the year 1818, the Assembly made the following explicit deliverance, viz: "With respect to dancing we think it necessary to observe, that however plausible it may appear to some, it is, perhaps, not the less dangerous on account of that plausibility. It is not from those things that the world acknowledges to be most wrong that the greatest danger is to be apprehended to religion, especially to the young. When the practice is carried to its highest extremes, all admit the consequences to be fatal; and why not then apprehend danger even from its incipient stages? It

is certainly in all its stages a fascinating and an infatuating practice. Let it once be introduced and it is difficult to give it limits. It steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions and hardens the heart. To guard you, beloved brethren, against its wiles and its fascinations we earnestly recommend that you consult that sobriety which the sacred pages require. We also trust that you will attend with the meekness and docility becoming the Christian character, to the admonitions on this subject of those whom you have chosen to watch for your souls." [Baird's Digest, p. 790]. We can but hope that in accordance with these words of the General Assembly, you will receive with meekness and docility what we have now to offer as from one whom you have chosen to watch for your souls.

1. We remark then first, that as now practiced, it is a custom seriously injurious to health. We have already said sufficient upon this point, and we allude to it again that we may make our enumeration of objections complete, and impress more deeply upon your minds so important a consideration. And here, because we know that youth is apt to be reckless in the expenditure of that which they seem to have in so full a measure, we turn for a moment to parents that we may suggest to them their responsibility. They have no more right to allow their children to injure their health with the dance, than with anything else. It may be a slow poison, and a gradual waste, but it is none the less a poison and a waste. It will be a poor satisfaction to a parent beholding the shattered constitution of a beloved son or daughter, or standing by their early graves to reflect, that the ruin was accomplished by slow and insidious advances. Parents have too deep an interest here to allow their children to bequeath to them such an inheritance of woe.

2. The custom also involves a foolish extravagance in dress and other expenses. The ball-room and the dancing-party must be made more attractive by extra ornaments in rings, bracelets, and clothing. A plain and otherwise becoming dress will not answer for the dance. There will be a rivalry among our youth to make the best appearance, where every one is observed, and so much of the charm of the assembly depends upon a toilette that may challenge admiration. This evil is the most marked, when the custom has become established, and the commodious ball-room gathers together a promiscuous assemblage, made up of several "Dancing sociables." Then extravagance in dress is followed by costly suppers, and expensive liquors, which while they drain the purse secure a night of revelry and excess. However economical and prudent our youth may be, they can not escape these expenses. Once committed to the dance, they must dress accordingly, and pass from the "Dancing sociable" to the ball-room with all its demands. Have you a right

thus to squander your own hard earnings? Have you a right thus to dissipate the property of your parents?

3. We affirm, too, that the dance is undignified, puerile, and often exceedingly revolting to refined taste. We are sure that any intelligent man would so pronounce it should he observe it, unexpectedly, for the first time. What meaning could he attach to this endless whirl of parties and this constant reeling to and fro? What sense could he discover in this shuffling in pairs up and down the room? With what dismay would he behold the unseemly contact of the sexes in a waltz or polka, and a freedom taken which shocks modesty and is revolting to true delicacy! How would his blood boil and his face be suffused with shame should he see his wife, sister or daughter, subjected to these questionable liberties? Let not our youth and maidens deceive themselves. The social dance can not make proper those motions of the body, and that familiarity with the person, which are universally condemned. Why should not a maiden shrink from these familiarities in the dance as well as by the fireside, or in the social and domestic circle? Strange, that there should be such a corruption of taste and refined sensibility that it should be allowed. Alas! we fear that the fine gold is already losing its lustre or such things would not exist. In this view of the matter the Westminster divines placed dancing in the list of things forbidden by the seventh commandment. They understood its tendency and were not under the influence of foolish prudery. We ask: Is it wise to indulge in an amusement so unbecoming, and in which there is danger that the passions may be inflamed and the worst emotions excited? Can a man carry coals in his bosom and not be burned?

4. We come now to what especially concerns professing Christians. To such we say: This indulgence destroys your influence over the impenitent and irreligious. You are bound to do good to such, and in no way can you accomplish more than by a pure example, and life that will prove that you are Christians. So far, however, from the social dance being a characteristic and mark of humble piety, it is, on the contrary, a characteristic and mark of intense worldliness. If you lend yourselves to it, you are guilty of worldly conformity, and you so identify yourselves with the ungodly that they will not admit that you are different from them. Can you faithfully warn and admonish against an irreligious life when you are thus living? Test this matter. In the respite of the dance, draw your ungodly companion aside and attempt to talk to him upon the subject of religion. Would not your already flushed cheek, a cheek flushed by the excitement and whirl of the evening, assume a deeper crimson as with cold contempt he would simply reply: "And this from you!" No, you would not presume to

make the experiment. You know too well that you have been shorn of your strength, and that such efforts would be a mockery. A life of humble piety is a standing rebuke to sin; but is sin rebuked when piety is thus concealed? Let a church become addicted to this pastime. Let the pastor, elders, deacons, and all the members indulge in it, would she not be shorn of her strength and wholly paralyzed? What sinner would be reclaimed by such a church? What soul, fresh from the baptism of the Holy Ghost, would venture within its communion? Would dancing Christians be pleased to have a dancing pastor, and a dancing session to take the spiritual oversight of them? You say: This is an extreme case. It may be. But we do not understand why the pastor, session, and all the members may not sacrifice their influence over the world as well as you. What is wrong for the whole is surely wrong for a part, and what is right for a part must be right for the whole. We repudiate the system that makes virtue change with mere rank or position.

5. But aside from the injury done to the ungodly, a scandal and reproach is thus brought upon the whole church. Men judge of the church by its members, and what they do comes back upon her for her glory or her shame. The world, however willing she may be to have the countenance of professing Christians, knows right well when they act inconsistently, and despises them for it. She knows, when they indulge in this custom, that they are not walking circumspectly, but that on the contrary they are violating their most sacred obligation. Who has not heard the sneers of the impenitent against such professors blended with expression of contempt for the church to which they belong? Is not this wounding the body of Christ? Is not this repeating the shameful buffeting and spitting? How can any who bear Christ's name involve themselves in such a sin? By what right do they bring shame and scandal upon their fellow professors? If they care not for themselves, surely they should care for others. By such conduct the glory of Zion is obscured, and her light is eclipsed. Consider, whose is the responsibility?

6. To these considerations we are constrained to add, that by this pastime piety is injured, and the soul disqualified for spiritual duties. It is even so. It will be found exceedingly difficult to sanctify the dance with the word of God and prayer. Who goes to the dance from his closet humbly asking God's blessing to go with him? Who muses upon God and eternity amid such wild festivities? Who returns therefrom save to lie upon a prayerless pillow, and lose a wounded conscience in a troubled sleep? Where is there an instance of eminent piety connected with this indulgence? It is a very Delilah to rob the Christian of his spiritual strength. It can not be a means of grace, nor

does it conduct one to the word of God, humble prayer, or pious communion. Far from it. It rather weighs down the soul as with a millstone, and soils the white raiment of holiness as with dust and ashes! Oh, beware how you indulge in that which defaces the image of God, and destroys the beauty and the power of humble piety.

7. Finally, we object to the social dance because we believe that it is calculated to quench the Holy Spirit. It is chiefly because we feel that God's spirit is with us that we have been constrained to call attention to this subject at this time. When God's people begin to pray, and men are enquiring what they must do to be saved, the dance is found ready to allure our youth. Is it any wonder that we are deeply solicitous as we behold this engine of evil in operation? We know that the souls committed to our care are precious. We can not answer it to God if we stand in the way of his work, or if we do not put you on your guard against so fearful a danger. We can not be mistaken here. If any stifle conviction and drown their serious feelings in the mazy dance, what is this but to grieve the Holy Ghost?

"I was once called" says an aged pastor, "to visit a young lady, who was said to be in despair. She had at some time previous been serious and had, it was hoped, resolutely set her face Zion-ward. In an evil hour some of her former associates called on her to accompany them to a ball. She refused to go. The occasion, the company, the parade, and gayety were all utterly dissonant from her present feelings. With characteristic levity and thoughtlessness they employed persuasion and ridicule: and finally so far prevailed, that with a desperate effort to shake off her convictions and regain her former security she said, 'Well I will go if I am lost'—God took her at her word. Her seriousness left her, and she wasted away and died in the agony of despair because she had quenched God's spirit."

This is an individual case, but it shows the tendency of the amusement. It is fascinating and infatuating in the extreme. "It steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions, and hardens the heart." It can not be otherwise. The whirl and excitement of the dance is no place for the saving and silent influences of the Holy Ghost. Let the custom prevail and God's spirit will be grieved. You can no more mix oil and water or cause fire and water to be at peace than you can blend the social dance and a revival of religion. One or the other must gain the ascendancy. If the revival advances the dance will cease, or if the dance triumphs the revival can not survive. Let us be careful how we either justify, or engage in this practice. The soul is too valuable to be lost, and it is folly as well as sin to hazard its salvation for so questionable an enjoy-



ment. We are standing on holy ground. We should beware lest we profane the place, and provoke God to withdraw his Holy Spirit.

We rejoice, however, to know that so many of our youth are alive to the dangers which we have portrayed. We are not ignorant of the Christian courage with which they persistently and successfully withstood an effort to introduce this custom; and we thank God that our hands are thus upheld and strengthened. In return, we would uphold and strengthen them. We pledge them our counsel, prayers and support. Better that we should not have any social gatherings than that the conscience of our youth should be defiled and our good name marred. Let our beloved youth stand firm, setting their faces like a flint against the first encroachment, and so save themselves from corruption and sin. Be vigilant and sober-minded. The adversary seeks to destroy. Let him have no advantage, but rather bid him away from the field of your Christian efforts and holy hopes.

For those who are ready to justify the dance we have a few words. If you are parents, we beseech you consider what you do. The bodies and the souls of your children are in your charge. Let no foolish whimsey with regard to the liberties of youth avail with you one moment to relax parental control; nor suffer yourselves to be blinded as to duty by specious arguments, the all that the dance can urge. Abstinence can not possibly injure your children, while you must admit that indulgence may do them harm. Give them the benefit of the doubt and restrain them from that which may prove disastrous to their spiritual interest, to say nothing of their health of body. If you do not, you may be obliged to reap a harvest of bitter reflections.

If you are young and given to this pastime, we pray you listen to our words. We express a pastor's solicitude, and we faintly hope that what we say will be heeded. Do not wound your conscience and put in peril your souls for so short-lived an amusement. Consider the evils of it which we have set before you, and give due weight to the replies we have made to all that can be said in its favor. Your life will be more valuable, your happiness more substantial, and your death-beds more serene. But if you will not abstain from it, at least respect the principles of others, and on no account allow yourselves to jeer and reproach those who will not join you. There is no argument in a sneer, and you violate the sanctions of friendship if you trifle with conscientious convictions. There are sins enough to answer for without staining your skirts with the blood of a soul. And remember ere you go to the dance humbly to kneel and ask God's blessing upon it, and when you return be sure you seek the smile of his approbation for yourselves and your companions.

And now let us all awake to righteousness. It is no time for folly or for sin. We need to be more alive to the many obligations that press upon us to live a godly life. We may deplore the time we spend in vain and sinful amusements, but we will never regret that we have lived in the fear of God and prayerfully devoted ourselves to his service. Let us live as if every day were our last, and then will we neither be surprised by death, nor make the exchange of world's under circumstances revolting to our feelings, or which may throw a shadow upon our Christian reputation. Again have we spoken as a watchman upon these walls. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, and quench not the Holy Spirit. May God add his blessing to our efforts, and confirm and keep you all unto his everlasting kingdom—Amen.

